

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION FOR

IN-CIRCUIT EMULATOR WITH GATEKEEPER FOR WATCHDOG TIMER

Inventors:

Craig Nemecek

Steve Roe

Prepared by:
WAGNER, MURABITO & HAO, LLP
Two North Market Street
Third Floor
San Jose, California 95113
(408) 938-9060

1
2
3
4
5 **IN-CIRCUIT EMULATOR WITH GATEKEEPER FOR WATCHDOG TIMER**
6
7
8

9 **CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED DOCUMENTS**

10 This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application Serial No.
11 09/975,105 filed October 10, 2001 to Nemecek entitled " Host to FPGA Interface
12 in an In-Circuit Emulation System", which is hereby incorporated. The application
13 is related to, incorporates by reference and claims priority benefit under 35 U.S.C.
14 §119(e) of provisional patent application serial no. 60/243,708 filed October 26,
15 2000 to Snyder, et al. entitled "Advanced Programmable Microcontroller Device"
16 which is also hereby incorporated herein by reference.
17

18 **COPYRIGHT NOTICE**

19 A portion of the disclosure of this patent document contains material which
20 is subject to copyright protection. The copyright owner has no objection to the
21 facsimile reproduction of the patent document or the patent disclosure, as it
22 appears in the Patent and Trademark Office patent file or records, but otherwise
23 reserves all copyright rights whatsoever.
24

25 **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

26 This invention relates generally to the field of In-Circuit Emulation. More
27 particularly, this invention in certain embodiments relates to methods and
28 apparatus for providing for watchdog timer functions using a gatekeeper in an In-
29 Circuit Emulation system.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

In-circuit emulation (ICE) has been used by software and hardware developers for a number of years as a development tool to emulate the operation of complex circuit building blocks and permit diagnosis and debugging of hardware and software. Such in-circuit emulation is most commonly used currently to analyze and debug the behavior of complex devices such as microcontrollers and microprocessors that have internal structures that are far too complex to readily model using computer simulation software alone.

FIGURE 1 illustrates an exemplary conventional in-circuit emulation arrangement 100 used to model, analyze and debug the operation of a microcontroller device. In this arrangement, a host computer (e.g., a personal computer) 110 is connected to a debug logic block 120 which is further connected to a special version of the microcontroller device that has been developed specially for use in emulation. Operational instructions are loaded from the host computer 110 through the debug logic 120 to the special version of the microcontroller 130. The debug logic 120 monitors operation of the microcontroller 130 as the instructions are executed. Depending upon the application, this operation may be monitored while the special version of the microcontroller 130 is interconnected with the circuitry that is intended to interface a production version of the microcontroller in the finished product under development. Such interconnection may be via simulation within host computer 110 or as actual circuitry or some combination thereof. As the circuit is stepped through its operation, the debug logic gathers information about the state of various components of the microcontroller 130 during operation and feeds that information back to the host computer 110 for analysis.

During the course of the analysis, various trace information such as time stamps, register values, data memory content, etc. may be logged in the host computer 110 for analysis and debugging by the designer. Additionally, it is generally the case that various break points can be defined by the designer that

1 cause the program to halt execution at various points in the operation to permit
2 detailed analysis. Other debugging tools may also be provided to enable the user
3 to debug the operation of the circuit.

4 In-circuit emulation systems such as 100 have a number of disadvantages
5 and limitations. In earlier systems, the microcontroller 130 might have been simply
6 the production version of the microcontroller itself with no special debugging
7 features. In such systems, the information that can be gathered by the ICE system
8 100 is limited to that which is available at the pinouts of the microcontroller 130 (or
9 which can be extracted from the microcontroller using clever programming or
10 special coding supported by the processor).

11 Enhancements to such early systems provided the microcontroller or other
12 processor with an array of built-in debugging tools that use standard pins on the
13 part and built-in instructions that facilitated in-circuit emulation. In such enhanced
14 processors, the emulation tools are integrated into the part and thus become a
15 design constraint for developing and improving the part. Thus, support for the
16 debugging instruction code and the like can increase the cost and complexity of the
17 circuit.

18 Newer systems often use a so-called "bond-out" microcontroller. A bond-out
19 version of the microcontroller is a version of the production microcontroller that has
20 been designed with special wirebonding pads on the chip that are not normally
21 connected in the production wirebonding. The bond-out version connects these
22 pads to pins on the microcontroller package to permit access to otherwise
23 inaccessible points of the circuit to facilitate debugging. This technique is in
24 common use, but has the disadvantage of imposing significant limitations on the
25 circuit layout to permit space and circuitry associated with the special wirebonding
26 pads. Additionally, it is usually the case that substantial interface circuitry and
27 other special circuitry to facilitate the debugging and bond-out has to be added to
28 the circuit. This increases the complexity, size, power consumption and potentially
29 reduces the yield of the production part. Moreover, development resources are
30 required to lay out the bond-out circuitry and pads and do associated design of

1 such bond-out circuitry. Additionally, instruction code must generally be provided
2 and supported for such an implementation. Such resources may have to be
3 applied with every updated version of the part and may significantly impact speed,
4 cost or flexibility in development of improved versions of the part.

5 A third technique, one that is used in the Pentium™ and Pentium Pro™
6 series of microprocessors available from Intel Corporation, provides a special
7 "probe mode" of operation of the processor. When the processor is placed in this
8 probe mode, a number of internal signals are routed to a "debug port" for use by the
9 in-circuit emulation system. This debug port is used to permit the in-circuit
10 emulation system to communicate with the processors at all times and, when
11 placed in probe mode, to read otherwise inaccessible probe points within the
12 processor. Of course, providing such a probe mode requires significant design
13 resources to design in all such probe and debug functions and associated
14 instruction code support into the standard processor. This, of course, increases
15 development cost, chip complexity and chip size. Moreover, such facilities become
16 a part of the processor design which must be carried through and updated as
17 required as enhancements to the original design are developed.

18 19 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 The present invention relates generally to handling watchdog timer events
21 in an ICE system. Objects, advantages and features of the invention will become
22 apparent to those skilled in the art upon consideration of the following detailed
23 description of the invention.

24 In one embodiment consistent with the present invention, a watchdog timer
25 control uses a gatekeeper in an In-Circuit Emulation system. The In-Circuit
26 Emulation system has a microcontroller operating in lock-step synchronization with
27 a virtual microcontroller. When a watchdog event occurs, the gatekeeper, forming
28 a part of the virtual microcontroller, crowbars the reset line of the virtual
29 microcontroller as well as the real microcontroller. This freezes the state of the
30 virtual microcontroller so that debug operations can be carried out. The gatekeeper

1 operates with its own gatekeeper clock independent of the microcontroller clock.
2 When a watchdog event occurs, the gatekeeper clock is rerouted to the virtual
3 microcontroller to facilitate debug operations of the virtual microcontroller. This
4 advantageously permits the host computer to query the registers and memory of
5 the virtual microcontroller after a watchdog event has occurred.

6 An In-Circuit Emulation system consistent with certain embodiments of the
7 present invention has a microcontroller having a microcontroller clock and a virtual
8 microcontroller running in lock-step synchronization with the microcontroller. A
9 host computer runs In-Circuit Emulation debug software, the host computer being
10 in communication with the virtual microcontroller. A gatekeeper circuit coupled to
11 the virtual microcontroller and the microcontroller, the gatekeeper circuit detecting
12 when a watchdog timer expires in the microcontroller and notifying the host
13 computer that the watchdog event has occurred.

14 A method of processing a watchdog timer event using a gatekeeper circuit
15 in a manner consistent with certain embodiment of the present invention includes
16 determining that a watchdog timer event has occurred in a microcontroller, the
17 microcontroller running in lock-step synchronization with a virtual microcontroller;
18 asserting a reset in the microcontroller and by holding the reset line of the
19 microcontroller in an asserted state; providing a gatekeeper clock signal to the
20 virtual microcontroller; notifying a host computer running In-Circuit Emulation
21 software that a watchdog timer event has occurred; and permitting the host
22 computer to query memory locations and registers of the virtual microcontroller.

23 A method consistent with certain embodiments of the present invention of
24 processing a watchdog timer event using a gatekeeper circuit includes determining
25 that a watchdog timer event has occurred in a microcontroller, the microcontroller
26 running in lock-step synchronization with a virtual microcontroller; asserting a reset
27 in the microcontroller and by holding the reset line of the microcontroller in an
28 asserted state; disabling a microcontroller clock signal from the virtual
29 microcontroller and replacing the microcontroller clock signal with a gatekeeper

1 clock signal to the virtual microcontroller; and notifying a host computer running In-
2 Circuit Emulation software that a watchdog timer event has occurred.

3 The above summaries are intended to illustrate exemplary embodiments of
4 the invention, which will be best understood in conjunction with the detailed
5 description to follow, and are not intended to limit the scope of the appended
6 claims.

8 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

9 The features of the invention believed to be novel are set forth with
10 particularity in the appended claims. The invention itself however, both as to
11 organization and method of operation, together with objects and advantages
12 thereof, may be best understood by reference to the following detailed description
13 of the invention, which describes certain exemplary embodiments of the invention,
14 taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings in which:

15 **FIGURE 1** is a block diagram of a conventional In-Circuit Emulation system.

16 **FIGURE 2** is a block diagram of an exemplary In-Circuit Emulation system
17 consistent with certain microcontroller embodiments of the present invention.

18 **FIGURE 3** is an illustration of the operational phases of an In-Circuit
19 Emulation system consistent with an embodiment of the present invention.

20 **FIGURE 4** is an illustration of the operational phases of an In-Circuit
21 Emulation system consistent with an embodiment of the present invention viewed
22 from a virtual microcontroller perspective.

23 **FIGURE 5** is a timing diagram useful in understanding an exemplary data
24 and control phase of operation of certain embodiments of the present invention.

25 **FIGURE 6** is a block diagram isolating the host to FPGA interface consistent
26 with an embodiment of the present invention

27 **FIGURE 7** is a flow chart describing the operation of the host to FPGA
28 interface in an embodiment consistent with the present invention.

1 **FIGURE 8** is a block diagram illustrating the gatekeeper function of an ICE
2 system consistent with certain embodiments of the present invention.

3 **FIGURE 9** is a flow chart of a halt process used in certain embodiments
4 consistent with the present invention.

5 **FIGURE 10** is a flow chart of a watchdog process used in certain
6 embodiments consistent with the present invention.

7 8 9 **DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION**

10 In the following detailed description of the present invention, numerous
11 specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the
12 present invention. However, it will be recognized by one skilled in the art that the
13 present invention may be practiced without these specific details or with
14 equivalents thereof. In other instances, well known methods, procedures,
15 components, and circuits have not been described in detail as not to unnecessarily
16 obscure aspects of the present invention.

17 18 **NOTATION AND NOMENCLATURE**

19 Some portions of the detailed descriptions which follow are presented in
20 terms of procedures, steps, logic blocks, processing, and other symbolic
21 representations of operations on data bits that can be performed on computer
22 memory. These descriptions and representations are the means used by those
23 skilled in the data processing arts to most effectively convey the substance of their
24 work to others skilled in the art. A procedure, computer executed step, logic block,
25 process, etc., is here, and generally, conceived to be a self-consistent sequence
26 of steps or instructions leading to a desired result. The steps are those requiring
27 physical manipulations of physical quantities.

28 Usually, though not necessarily, these quantities take the form of electrical
29 or magnetic signals capable of being stored, transferred, combined, compared, and

1 otherwise manipulated in a computer system. It has proven convenient at times,
2 principally for reasons of common usage, to refer to these signals as bits, values,
3 elements, symbols, characters, terms, numbers, or the like.

4 It should be borne in mind, however, that all of these and similar terms are
5 to be associated with the appropriate physical quantities and are merely convenient
6 labels applied to these quantities. Unless specifically stated otherwise as apparent
7 from the following discussions, it is appreciated that throughout the present
8 invention, discussions utilizing terms such as "processing" or "transferring" or
9 "executing" or "releasing" or "instructing" or "issuing" or "halting" or "clearing" or the
10 like, refer to the action and processes of a computer system, or similar electronic
11 computing device, that manipulates and transforms data represented as physical
12 (electronic) quantities within the computer system's registers and memories into
13 other data similarly represented as physical quantities within the computer system
14 memories or registers or other such information storage, transmission or display
15 devices.

16 17 **IN-CIRCUIT EMULATOR WITH GATEKEEPER FOR WATCHDOG TIMER IN** 18 **ACCORDANCE WITH THE INVENTION**

19 While this invention is susceptible of embodiment in many different forms,
20 there is shown in the drawings and will herein be described in detail specific
21 embodiments, with the understanding that the present disclosure is to be
22 considered as an example of the principles of the invention and not intended to limit
23 the invention to the specific embodiments shown and described. In the description
24 below, like reference numerals are used to describe the same, similar or
25 corresponding parts in the several views of the drawings.

26 A commercial ICE system utilizing the present invention is available from
27 Cypress Micro Systems, Inc., for the CY8C25xxx/26xxx series of microcontrollers.
28 Detailed information regarding this commercial product is available from Cypress
29 Micro Systems, Inc., 22027 17th Avenue SE, Suite 201, Bothell, WA 98021, in the

1 form of version 1.11 of "PSoC Designer: Integrated Development Environment User
2 Guide", which is hereby incorporated by reference. While the present invention is
3 described in terms of an ICE system for the above exemplary microcontroller
4 device, the invention is equally applicable to other complex circuitry including
5 microprocessors and other circuitry that is suitable for analysis and debugging
6 using in-circuit emulation. Moreover, the invention is not limited to the exact
7 implementation details of the exemplary embodiment used herein for illustrative
8 purposes.

9 Referring now to **FIGURE 2**, an architecture for implementation of an
10 embodiment of an ICE system of the present invention is illustrated as system 200.
11 In system 200, a Host computer 210 (e.g., a personal computer based on a
12 Pentium™ class microprocessor) is interconnected (e.g., using a standard PC
13 interface 214 such as a parallel printer port connection, a universal serial port
14 (USB) connection, etc.) with a base station 218. The host computer 210 generally
15 operates to run an ICE computer program to control the emulation process and
16 further operates in the capacity of a logic analyzer to permit a user to view
17 information provided from the base station 218 for use in analyzing and debugging
18 a system under test or development.

19 The base station 218 is based upon a general purpose programmable
20 hardware device such as a gate array configured to function as a functionally
21 equivalent "virtual microcontroller" 220 (or other device under test (DUT)). This is
22 accomplished using an associated integral memory 222 which stores program
23 instructions, data, trace information and other associated information. Thus, the
24 base station is configured as an emulator of the internal microprocessor portion of
25 the microcontroller 232. In preferred embodiments, a field programmable gate
26 array FPGA (or other programmable logic device) is configured to function as the
27 virtual microcontroller 220. The FPGA and virtual microcontroller 220 will be
28 referred to interchangeably herein. The base station 218 is coupled (e.g., using a
29 four wire interface 226) to a standard production microcontroller 232 mounted in a
30 mounting device referred to as a "pod". The pod, in certain embodiments, provides

1 connections to the microcontroller 232 that permit external probing as well as
2 interconnection with other circuitry as might be used to simulate a system under
3 development.

4 The FPGA of the base station 218 of the current embodiment is designed
5 to emulate the core processor functionality (microprocessor functions, Arithmetic
6 Logic Unit functions and RAM and ROM memory functions) of the Cypress
7 CY8C25xxx/26xxx series microcontrollers. The CY8C25xxx/26xxx series of
8 microcontrollers also incorporates I/O functions and an interrupt controller as well
9 as programmable digital and analog circuitry. This circuitry need not be modeled
10 using the FPGA 220. Instead, the I/O read information, interrupt vectors and other
11 information can be passed to the FPGA 220 from the microcontroller 232 over the
12 interface 226 as will be described later.

13 In order to minimize the need for any special ICE related functions on the
14 microcontroller 232 itself, the FPGA 220 and associated circuitry of the base station
15 218 are designed to operate functionally in a manner identically to that of
16 microprocessor portion of the production microcontroller, but to provide for access
17 to extensive debug tools including readout of registers and memory locations to
18 facilitate traces and other debugging operations.

19 The base station 218's virtual microcontroller 220 operates to execute the
20 code programmed into the microcontroller 232 in lock-step operation with the
21 microcontroller 232. Thus, the actual microcontroller 232 is freed of any need to
22 provide significant special facilities for ICE, since any such facilities can be
23 provided in the virtual microcontroller 220. The base station 218's virtual
24 microcontroller 220 and microcontroller 232 operate together such that I/O reads
25 and interrupts are fully supported in real time. The combination of real and virtual
26 microcontroller behave just as the microcontroller 232 would alone under normal
27 operating conditions. I/O reads and interrupt vectors are transferred from the
28 microcontroller 232 to the base station 218 as will be described later. Base station
29 218 is then able to provide the host computer 210 with the I/O reads and interrupt

1 vectors as well as an array of information internal to the microcontroller 232 within
2 memory and register locations that are otherwise inaccessible.

3 In the designing of a microcontroller other complex circuit such as the
4 microcontroller 232, it is common to implement the design using the Verilog™
5 language (or other suitable language). Thus, it is common that the full functional
6 design description of the microcontroller is fully available in a software format. The
7 base station 218 of the current embodiment is based upon the commercially
8 available Spartan™ series of FPGAs from Xilinx, Inc., 2100 Logic Drive, San Jose,
9 CA 95124. The Verilog™ description can be used as the input to the FPGA design
10 and synthesis tools available from the FPGA manufacturer to realize the virtual
11 microcontroller 220 (generally after timing adjustments and other debugging).
12 Thus, design and realization of the FPGA implementation of an emulator for the
13 microcontroller (virtual microcontroller) or other device can be readily achieved by
14 use of the Verilog™ description along with circuitry to provide interfacing to the base
15 station and the device under test (DUT).

16 In the embodiment described in connection with **FIGURE 2**, the actual
17 production microcontroller 232 carries out its normal functions in the intended
18 application and passes I/O information and other information needed for debugging
19 to the FPGA 220. The virtual microcontroller 220 implemented within the FPGA of
20 base station 218 serves to provide the operator with visibility into the core processor
21 functions that are inaccessible in the production microcontroller 232. Thus, the
22 FPGA 220, by virtue of operating in lock-step operation with the microcontroller 232
23 provides an exact duplicate of internal registers, memory contents, interrupt vectors
24 and other useful debug information. Additionally, memory 222 can be used to store
25 information useful in trace operations that is gathered by the FPGA 220 during
26 execution of the program under test. This architecture, therefore, permits the
27 operator to have visibility into the inner workings of the microcontroller 232 without
28 need to provide special bondouts and expensive circuitry on the microcontroller
29 itself.

1 The base station 218's FPGA based virtual microcontroller 220, operating
2 under control of host computer 210, carries out the core processor functions of
3 microcontroller 232 and thus contains a functionally exact emulated copy of the
4 contents of the registers and memory of the real microcontroller 232. The ICE
5 system starts both microcontrollers (real and virtual) at the same time and keeps
6 them running in synchronization. The real microcontroller 232 sends I/O data to
7 the base station 218 (and in turn to the ICE software operating on the host
8 computer 210 if required) fast enough to keep the real microcontroller 232 and the
9 virtual microcontroller 220 of base station 218 in synchronization. Whenever the
10 system is halted (i.e., when the system is not emulating), other information such
11 as flash memory programming functions, test functions, etc. can be sent over the
12 interface.

13 Because the microcontroller 232 operates in synchronization with the virtual
14 microcontroller 220, less data needs to be sent over the four wire interface than
15 would be required in an ICE system otherwise. The type of data sent over the lines
16 is allowed to change depending on when the data is sent in the execution
17 sequence. In other words, depending on the execution sequence time, the
18 information over the data lines can be commands to the real microcontroller 232
19 or they can be data. Since the clock frequency of the real microcontroller 232 is
20 programmable, it copies its current clock on one of the lines of the four wire
21 interface. Moreover, the lock-step operation of the microcontroller 232 and the
22 virtual microcontroller 220 allows the virtual microcontroller 220 to not require
23 certain resources of the microcontroller 232 such as timers, counters, amplifiers,
24 etc. since they are fully implemented in the microcontroller 232. In addition, the
25 microcontroller 232 (or other DUT) can be debugged in real time without need for
26 extensive debug logic residing on the microcontroller 232, since all registers and
27 memory locations, etc. are available through the virtual microcontroller 220.

28 In the embodiment illustrated, the basic interface used is a four line interface
29 between microcontroller 232 and base station 218. This interface permits use of
30 a standard Category Five patch cable to connect the microcontroller 232 and base

1 station 218 in one embodiment, but of course, this is not to be considered limiting.
2 The four wire interface 226 of the present embodiment can be functionally divided
3 into two functional portions. A data transport portion 242 carries two data lines in
4 the current embodiment. A clock portion 246 carries a debug system clock plus
5 the microcontroller clock signal for the microcontroller 232. Three additional lines
6 are also provided (not shown) for supply, ground and a reset line. But, the data
7 transport portion 242 and the clock portion 246 are of primary interest, since the
8 supply and reset functions can be readily provided in any other suitable manner.

9 The two portions of the interface are implemented in the current embodiment
10 using four lines as described, however, in other embodiments, these two portions
11 can be implemented with as few as two wires. In the current embodiment, the
12 microcontroller clock signal can be varied by programming (even dynamically
13 during execution of a program). Therefore, it is desirable to have two clock signals
14 - the microcontroller clock to easily track the microcontroller clock timing as well
15 as a system clock that regulates the data transfer and other operations. However,
16 in other embodiments, particularly where a clock frequency is not changed
17 dynamically, a single clock can be used. The single clock can be multiplied or
18 divided as required to implement the required clocking signals.

19 The present embodiment using an eight bit microcontroller that only reads
20 eight bits at a time on any given I/O read. Thus, the present microcontroller 232
21 needs only to effect serializing and transferring a maximum of one eight bit I/O read
22 for each instruction cycle. This is easily accommodated using two data lines
23 transferring four bits each over four system clock cycles. However, using a clock
24 which is two times faster, a single line could equally well transfer the data in the
25 same time. Similarly, four lines could be used to transfer the same data in only two
26 clock cycles. In any case, the objective is to transfer the data in a short enough
27 time to permit the virtual microcontroller 220 to process the data and issue any
28 needed response before the next instruction cycle begins. The time required to
29 accomplish this is held at a minimum in the current invention, since the system

1 synchronization eliminates need for any overhead protocol for transmission of the
2 data.

3 The current embodiment of the invention uses a four line communication
4 interface and method of communicating between the FPGA within base station 218
5 (acting as a "virtual microcontroller" 220 or ICE) and the real microcontroller device
6 under test (microcontroller 232). The four line communication interface is time-
7 dependent so that different information can be transferred at different times over a
8 small number of communication lines. Moreover, since the two processors operate
9 in lockstep, there is no need to provide bus arbitration, framing, or other protocol
10 overhead to effect the communication between the microcontroller 232 and the
11 virtual microcontroller 220. This interface is used for, among other things,
12 transferring of I/O data from the microcontroller 232 to the FPGA 220 (since the
13 FPGA emulates only the core processor functions of the microcontroller in the
14 current embodiment). A first interface line (Data1) is a data line used by the
15 microcontroller 232 to send I/O data to the FPGA based virtual microcontroller 220.
16 This line is also used to notify the FPGA 220 of pending interrupts. This Data1 line
17 is only driven by the real microcontroller 232. A second data line (Data2), which is
18 bidirectional, is used by the microcontroller 232 to send I/O data to the FPGA based
19 virtual microcontroller of base station 218. In addition, the FPGA 220 uses the
20 Data2 line to convey halt requests (i.e., to implement simple or complex
21 breakpoints) to the microcontroller 232.

22 A third interface line is a 24/48 Mhz debug system clock used to drive the
23 virtual microcontroller 220's communication state machines (the logic used within
24 the state controller to communicate with the microcontroller 232). In the current
25 embodiment, this clock always runs at 24 MHz unless the microcontroller 232's
26 internal clock is running at 24 Mhz. In this case the system clock switches to 48
27 Mhz. Of course, these exact clock speeds are not to be considered limiting, but are
28 presented as illustrative of the current exemplary embodiment. The fourth interface
29 line is the internal microcontroller clock from the microcontroller 232.

1 A fifth line can be used to provide a system reset signal to effect the
2 simultaneous startup of both microcontrollers. This fifth line provides a convenient
3 mechanism to reset the microcontrollers, but in most environments, the
4 simultaneous startup can also be effected in other ways including switching of
5 power. Sixth and Seventh lines are provided in the current interface to provide
6 power and ground for power supply.

7 The base station 218's virtual microcontroller 220 communicates with the
8 microcontroller 232 via four signal and clock lines forming a part of the four line
9 interface 226 forming a part of a seven wire connection as described below. The
10 interface signals travel over a short (e.g., one foot) of CAT5 network cable. The ICE
11 transmits break commands to the microcontroller 232 via the base station 218,
12 along with register read/write commands when the microcontroller 232 is halted.
13 The microcontroller 232 uses the interface to return register information when
14 halted, and to send I/O read, interrupt vector, and watchdog information while
15 running. The microcontroller 232 also sends a copy of its internal clocks for the
16 ICE. The four lines of the four line interface are the first four entries in the table
17 below. Each of the signals and their purpose is tabulated below in **TABLE 1**:
18
19
20

Signal Name	Signal Direction with Respect to Base Station 218	Description
U_HCLK (Data Clock, HCLOCK)	In	24/48MHz data clock driven by microcontroller 232. This clock is used to drive the ICE virtual microcontroller communication state machines. This clock always runs at 24MHz, unless the U_CCLK clock is running at 24MHz — then it switches to 48MHz.
U_CCLK (microcontroller Clock or CCLOCK)	In	The internal microcontroller 232 CPU clock.
U_D1_IRQ (Data1)	In	One of two data lines used by the microcontroller 232 to send I/O data to the ICE. This line is also used to notify the ICE of pending interrupts. This line is only driven by the microcontroller 232 (i.e., unidirectional).
U_D0_BRQ (Data0)	In/Out	One of two data lines used by the microcontroller 232 to send I/O data to the ICE. The ICE uses this line to convey halt requests and other information to the microcontroller 232. This line is used for bi-directional communication.
ICE_POD_RST (RESET)	Out	Optional active high reset signal to microcontroller 232.
ICE_POD_PW_R (POWER)	Out	Optional power supply to microcontroller 232.
ICE_POD_GND	Out	Optional ground wire to microcontroller 232.

TABLE 1

1 Synchronization between the microcontroller 232 and the virtual
2 microcontroller 220 is achieved by virtue of their virtually identical operation. They
3 are both started simultaneously by a power on or reset signal. They then track
4 each other's operation continuously executing the same instructions using the
5 same clocking signals. The system clock signal and the microcontroller clock
6 signal are shared between the two microcontrollers (real and virtual) so that even
7 if the microprocessor clock is changed during operation, they remain in lock-step.

8 In accordance with certain embodiments of the invention, a mechanism is
9 provided for allowing the FPGA 220 of base station 218 and the microcontroller 232
10 to stop at the same instruction in response to a breakpoint event (a break or halt).
11 The FPGA 220 has the ability monitor the microcontroller states of microcontroller
12 232 for a breakpoint event, due to its lock-step operation with microcontroller 232.
13 In the process of executing an instruction, an internal start of instruction cycle (SOI)
14 signal is generated (by both microcontrollers) that indicates that the device is about
15 to execute a next instruction. If a breakpoint signal (a halt or break signal - the
16 terms "halt" and "break" are used synonymously herein) is generated by the FPGA,
17 the execution of the microcontroller 232 can be stopped at the SOI signal point
18 before the next instruction starts.

19 Although the SOI signal is labeled as a signal indicating the start of an
20 instruction, the SOI signal is used for multiple purposes in the present
21 microcontroller. It is not required that the SOI signal actually indicate a start of
22 instruction for many purposes, merely that there be a convenient time reference on
23 which to base certain actions. For example, any reference signal that always takes
24 place prior to execution of an instruction can be used as a time reference for
25 reading a halt command. Accordingly, any such available or generated reference
26 signal can be used equivalently as a "halt read" signal without departing from the
27 present invention. That notwithstanding, the SOI signal is conveniently used in the
28 current embodiment and will be used as a basis for the explanation that follows, but
29 should not be considered limiting.

1 Logic within the FPGA 220 of base station 218 allows not only for
2 implementation of simple breakpoint events, but also for producing breakpoints as
3 a result of very complex events. By way of example, and not limitation, a
4 breakpoint can be programmed to occur when a program counter reaches 0x0030,
5 an I/O write is happening and the stack pointer is about to overflow. Other such
6 complex breakpoints can readily be programmed to assist in the process of
7 debugging. Complex breakpoints are allowed, in part, also because the virtual
8 microcontroller 220 has time to carry out complex computations and comparisons
9 after receipt of I/O data transfers from the microcontroller 232 and before the next
10 instruction commences. After the receipt of I/O data from the microcontroller 232,
11 the FPGA 220 of base station 218 has a relatively long amount of computation time
12 to determine if a breakpoint event has occurred or not. In the event a breakpoint
13 has occurred, the microcontroller 232 can be halted and the host processor 210 is
14 informed.

15 An advantage of this process is that the FPGA 220 and the microcontroller
16 232 can be stopped at the same time in response to a breakpoint event. Another
17 advantage is that complex and robust breakpoint events are allowed while still
18 maintaining breakpoint synchronization between the two devices. These
19 advantages are achieved with minimal specialized debugging logic (to send I/O
20 data over the interface) and without special bond-out circuitry being required in the
21 microcontroller device under test 232.

22 Normal operation of the current microcontroller is carried out in a cycle of
23 two distinct stages or phases as illustrated in connection with **FIGURE 3**. The
24 cycle begins with the initial startup or reset of both the microcontroller 232 and the
25 virtual microcontroller 220 at 304. Once both microcontrollers are started in
26 synchronism, the data phase 310 is entered in which serialized data is sent from
27 the microcontroller to the virtual microcontroller. At the start of this phase the
28 internal start of instruction (SOI) signal signifies the beginning of this phase will
29 commence with the next low to high transition of the system clock. In the current
30 embodiment, this data phase lasts four system clock cycles, but this is only

1 intended to be exemplary and not limiting. The SOI signal further indicates that any
2 I/O data read on the previous instruction is now latched into a register and can be
3 serialized and transmitted to the virtual microcontroller. Upon the start of the data
4 phase 310, any such I/O read data (eight bits of data in the current embodiment)
5 is serialized into two four bit nibbles that are transmitted using the Data0 and Data1
6 lines of the current interface data portion 242. One bit is transmitted per data line
7 at the clock rate of the system clock. Thus, all eight bits are transmitted in the four
8 clock cycles of the data transfer phase.

9 At the end of the four clock cycle data transfer phase in the current
10 embodiment, the control phase 318 begins. During this control phase, which in the
11 current embodiment may be as short as two microcontroller clock periods (or as
12 long as about fourteen clock periods, depending upon the number of cycles
13 required to execute an instruction), the microcontroller 232 can send interrupt
14 requests, interrupt data, and watchdog requests. Additionally, the virtual
15 microcontroller 220 can issue halt (break) commands. If a halt command is issued,
16 it is read by the microcontroller at the next SOI signal. Once the control phase
17 ends, the data transfer phase repeats. If there is no data to transfer, data1 and
18 data2 remain idle (e.g., at a logic low state). To simplify the circuitry, I/O bus data
19 are sent across the interface on every instruction, even if it is not a bus transfer.
20 Since the virtual microcontroller 220 is operating in synchronization with
21 microcontroller 232 and executing the same instructions, the emulation system
22 knows that data transferred during non I/O read transfers can be ignored.

23 **FIGURE 4** shows this operational cycle from the perspective of the virtual
24 microcontroller 220. During the data transfer phase 310, the serialized data is
25 received over Data0 and Data1. It should be noted that prior to receipt of this I/O
26 data, the microcontroller 232 has already had access to this data for several clock
27 cycles and has already taken action on the data. However, until receipt of the I/O
28 read data during the data transfer phase 310, the virtual microcontroller 220 has not
29 had access to the data. Thus, upon receipt of the I/O read data during the data
30 phase 310, the virtual microcontroller 220 begins processing the data to catch up

1 with the existing state of microcontroller 232. Moreover, once the I/O data has been
2 read, the host computer 210 or virtual microcontroller 220 may determine that a
3 complex or simple breakpoint has been reached and thus need to issue a break
4 request. Thus, the virtual microcontroller should be able to process the data quickly
5 enough to make such determinations and issue a break request prior to the next
6 SOI. Break requests are read at the internal SOI signal, which also serves as a
7 convenient reference time marker that indicates that I/O data has been read and
8 is available for transmission by the microcontroller 232 to the virtual microcontroller
9 220.

10 By operating in the manner described, any breakpoints can be guaranteed
11 to occur in a manner such that both the virtual microcontroller 220 and the
12 microcontroller 232 halt operation in an identical state. Moreover, although the
13 virtual microcontroller 220 and the microcontroller 232 operate on I/O data obtained
14 at different times, both microcontrollers are in complete synchronization by the time
15 each SOI signal occurs. Thus, the virtual microcontroller 220 and the
16 microcontroller 232 can be said to operate in lock-step with respect to a common
17 time reference of the SOI signal as well as with respect to execution of any
18 particular instruction within a set of instructions being executed by both virtual
19 microcontroller 220 and the microcontroller 232.

20 A transfer of I/O data as just described is illustrated with reference to the
21 timing diagram of **FIGURE 5**. After the microcontroller 232 completes an I/O read
22 instruction, it sends the read data back to the base station 218 to the virtual
23 microcontroller, since the virtual microcontroller 220 of the present embodiment
24 implements only the core processor functions (and not the I/O functions). The ICE
25 system can expect the incoming data stream for an I/O read to commence with the
26 first positive edge of U_HCLK (the debug or system clock) when SOI signal for the
27 following instruction is at a predetermined logic level (e.g., a logic high). Thus, at
28 time T1, the SOI signal makes a transition to a logic high and one system clock
29 cycle later at time T2, the data transfer phase 310 begins. This timing allows the
30 ICE system to get the read data to the emulated accumulator of base station 218

1 before it is needed by the next instruction's execution. Note that the first SOI pulse
2 shown in **FIGURE 5** represents the first SOI following the I/O read instruction (but
3 could be any suitable reference time signal). Transfer of the data from the
4 microcontroller 232 is carried out using the two data lines (data2 and data1, shown
5 as U_D0_BRK and U_D1_IRQ) with each line carrying four bits of an eight bit word.
6 During this data transfer phase 310, an eight bit transfer representing the I/O read
7 data can take place from the microcontroller 232 to the base station 210 in the four
8 clock cycles between T2 and T3. The control phase 318 starts at time T3 and
9 continues until the beginning of the next data transfer phase 310. The SOI signal
10 at T4 indicates that the next data transfer phase is about to start and serves as a
11 reference time to read the data2 line to detect the presence of any halt signal from
12 the virtual microcontroller 220. The current control phase 318 ends at T5 and the
13 next data transfer phase 310 begins.

14 The base station 218 only transmits break (halt) commands to the
15 microcontroller 232 during the control phase. After the microcontroller 232 is halted
16 in response to the break command, the interface can be used to implement
17 memory / register read / write commands. The halt command is read at the SOI
18 signal transition (T1 or T4). The microcontroller 232 uses the interface to return
19 register information when halted, and to send I/O read, interrupt vector and
20 watchdog timer information while running.

21 To summarize, a break is handled as follows: The ICE asserts U_D0_BRQ
22 (break) to stop the microcontroller 232. When the ICE asserts the break, the
23 microcontroller 232 reads it at the SOI transition to high and stops. The ICE assert
24 breaks during the control phase. The microcontroller 232 samples the U_D0_BRQ
25 line at the rising edge of SOI (at T4) to determine if a break is to take place. After
26 halting, the ICE may issue commands over the U_D0_BRQ line to query the status
27 of various registers and memory locations of the virtual microcontroller or carry out
28 other functions.

29 In the case of an interrupt, if an interrupt request is pending for the
30 microcontroller 232, the system asserts U_D1_IRQ as an interrupt request during

1 the control phase of the microcontroller 232. Since the interrupt signal comes to
2 the virtual microcontroller 220 from the microcontroller 232 during the control
3 phase, the virtual microcontroller 220 knows the timing of the interrupt signal going
4 forward. That is, the interrupt signal is the synchronizing event rather than the SOI
5 signal. In case of an interrupt, there is no SOI, because the microcontroller 232
6 performs special interrupt processing including reading the current interrupt vector
7 from the interrupt controller. Since program instructions are not being executed
8 during the interrupt processing, there is no data / control phase. The virtual
9 microcontroller 220 expects the interrupt vector to be passed at a deterministic time
10 across the interface during this special interrupt processing and before execution
11 of instructions proceeds. Since the virtual microcontroller 220 of the current
12 embodiment does not implement an interrupt controller, interrupt vectors are read
13 from the interrupt controller upon receipt of an interrupt request over the interface.
14 The interrupt vector data is passed over the interface using the two data lines as
15 with the I/O read data, following the assertion of an internal microcontroller IVR_N
16 (active low) signal during the control phase. In the current embodiment, an
17 interrupt cycle is approximately 10 clock cycles long. Since the interrupt service
18 cycle is much longer than the time required to transfer the current interrupt vector,
19 the data is easily transferred using the two data lines, with no particular timing
20 issues.

21 If the microcontroller 232 undergoes a watchdog reset, it asserts the IRQ
22 (interrupt) and BRQ (break) lines indefinitely. The ICE detects this condition and
23 further detects that the microcontroller clock has stopped. This is enough to
24 establish that a watchdog reset has occurred. The ICE applies an external reset,
25 and notifies the ICE software in the host computer 210.

26 Referring now to the block diagram of **FIGURE 6**, the interface between the
27 host processor 210 and the base station 218 of a preferred embodiment of the
28 present invention is illustrated. In this embodiment, the connection between the
29 host processor 210 and the FPGA 220 is advantageously provided using a standard
30 IEEE 1284 parallel printer cable 214 with communication carried out using a

1 modification of standard EPP (enhanced parallel port) communication protocol. Of
2 particular interest in this communication interface is the data strobe connection
3 412, the INIT (initialize) connection 416 and the eight data connections (data line
4 0 through data line 7) 420. These connections are directly connected to the FPGA
5 with the INIT connection connected to the FPGA RESET pin. The data strobe line
6 412 is connected to the FPGA configuration clock input and the eight data lines 420
7 are connected to data input pins of the FPGA.

8 When the software on the host is started, the INIT connection 416 is driven
9 by the host computer 210 to a logic low causing the FPGA to clear its configuration
10 memory 424 and begin receiving configuration data. The configuration data is
11 stored in configuration memory to define the functionality of the FPGA. This
12 configuration data is clocked in eight bits at a time over the data lines 420 using the
13 data strobe signal as a clock signal. That is, an eight bit word is placed on the
14 interface data lines 420 by host processor 210 followed by toggling the data strobe
15 line to clock the data into the FPGA 220. This unidirectional data transfer from the
16 host computer incorporates a set of design parameters that configure the circuitry
17 of the FPGA 220 to function, in part, as a standard IEEE 1284 EPP interface once
18 the FPGA 220 is programmed and functional. This programming configures the
19 FPGA 220 to have an IEEE 1284 EPP interface with the data lines 420 connected
20 to the FPGA as bidirectional data lines, the configuration clock configured to
21 operate as the IEEE 1284 data clock line connected to data strobe 412 and the INIT
22 line 416 continues to drive the FPGA clear and reset function.

23 Data transfer continues in this manner until the FPGA 220 is fully
24 programmed by virtue of having received the correct amount of data required by the
25 particular FPGA 220 used in base station 218. Thus, each time the host software
26 is initialized, a data transfer to the FPGA 220 occurs to program the FPGA 220 to
27 function in its capacity of a virtual microcontroller (in this embodiment). Once
28 programming ceases, the FPGA 220 "wakes up" as a virtual microcontroller (or
29 whatever device is programmed into the FPGA 220 in general) and begins to
30 function as the virtual microcontroller. At this point, the interface 214 ceases to

1 function as a unidirectional programming interface and begins to function as a
2 bidirectional communication interface using the programmed operation of the
3 FPGA 220 communicating through its programmed IEEE 1284 EPP parallel
4 communication interface.

5 In the virtual microcontroller mode of operation of the FPGA 220,
6 communication is carried out using the eight data lines 420 as bidirectional data
7 lines compliant with IEEE 1284 EPP parallel communication protocol with the data
8 strobe line 412 used as a data clock and the INIT line 416 continuing to act as a
9 clear and reset signal. INIT line 416 can thus be used to reinitialize the
10 programming of the FPGA 220, for example, to revise a design parameter or to
11 simply restart the ICE system. TABLE 2 below summarizes the significant
12 connections of this interface.

13

Interface Lines	Program Mode Function	Free Running "Awake" Mode Function
Data bits 0 through 7	Unidirectional data into the FPGA	Bidirectional EPP compliant communication
Data Strobe	Unidirectional programming clock	EPP Compliant Data Strobe
INIT	Low signal indicates clear configuration memory and prepare to receive new configuration data	Low signal indicates clear configuration memory and enter programming mode - prepare to receive new configuration data

14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24

TABLE 2

20 The programming and communication process between the host 210 and
21 the FPGA 220 is described in flow chart 500 of FIGURE 7 starting at 502. The host
22 software is loaded and initialized at 506, and asserts a logic low on the INIT line
23 416 to signal a reset and clearing of the FPGA 220's configuration memory 424 at
24 510. In response to this signal, the FPGA 220 clears configuration memory 424 at

1 514. The Host computer 210 then begins transferring a new set of configuration
2 parameters to the FPGA 220 at 520 by strobing data into the FPGA's configuration
3 memory 424. This set of configuration parameters configures the FPGA 220 to
4 have an IEEE 1284 EPP compliant communication interface. In other
5 embodiments, other modes of communication could also be used (e.g., extended
6 communication port (ECP) or serial communications) could be used without
7 departing from the invention.

8 This process continues at 526 until all data are transferred at 530. The
9 FPGA 220 then wakes up to operate with the new configuration parameters stored
10 in configuration memory 424 at 534. The FPGA 220 continues to operate as
11 configured at 538 until such time as the INIT line 416 is again asserted by the Host
12 computer 210 at 544. Control then returns to 514 where the FPGA 220 is cleared
13 and the reprogramming process proceeds as previously described.

14 Using this mechanism, the FPGA 220 can be coupled to the host computer
15 210 using a single interface 214 for both programming the FPGA 220 and for later
16 communication with the FPGA 220 operating as the virtual microcontroller. This
17 avoids use of multiple interface connections and/or use of a separate processor to
18 handle details associated with configuration programming and communication with
19 the FPGA 220.

20 The present invention provides for full in-circuit emulation without need for
21 a special bond-out version of a DUT. This is accomplished using a minimal
22 amount of design embedded within the DUT itself. In the current embodiment, the
23 only functionality required of the production microcontroller itself is to provide for
24 transfer of data over two lines forming the data portion of the interface and reading
25 commands for break, watchdog and interrupt functions received over the same two
26 data lines. These provisions are simple to implement, and use minimal circuitry.
27 The two additional pinouts used for this function were readily accommodated in the
28 eight bit microcontroller of the current invention. Moreover, the use of a single
29 standard IEEE 1284 printer cable interface between the virtual microcontroller and
30 the host computer to provide both FPGA programming and communication

1 between the ICE system and the Host processor provides for a simple and versatile
2 implementation.

3 When the above system is operating in lock-step synchronization, the
4 particular state of the microcontroller (settings, register values, memory contents,
5 etc.) cannot be observed while running. Only when the virtual microcontroller 220
6 and microcontroller 232 are halted can these parameters be readily observed. A
7 halt can be carried out in either of two ways. Either a halt can be implemented as
8 a break within the debug code, or a user can initiate a halt (generally due to belief
9 that there is a problem in operation of the software.) In order to handle the halt
10 functions as well as other functions, base station 218 incorporates a gatekeeper
11 circuit 602 as illustrated in **FIGURE 8**. Gatekeeper 602 can communicate with the
12 host computer 210 via interface 214. Gatekeeper circuit 602 also receives inputs
13 from the bus 226 such as data0 and data1 from data lines 242, as well as clock
14 signals 246 including CCLOCK and HCLOCK. Additionally, gatekeeper 602
15 receives signals from a breakpoint controller 606 which also forms a part of base
16 station 218 to control programmed breaks in the operational code running on virtual
17 microcontroller 220 and standard microcontroller 232.

18 Gatekeeper 602 is also able to send and receive messages to and from the
19 host computer 210 via interface 214 and send reset signals to both the virtual
20 microcontroller 220 and the microcontroller 232 under test. Gatekeeper 602 only
21 permits queries to the virtual microcontroller 220 to ascertain the state of registers,
22 memory, etc. when both the virtual microcontroller 220 and the real microcontroller
23 232 are both in a halted state. Thus, the gatekeeper 602 regulates the host
24 computer 210's debug software's access to the virtual microcontroller 220 to
25 assure that emulation operations are not disrupted.

26 In order to assure that gatekeeper 602 operates independently of virtual
27 microcontroller 220 and standard microcontroller under test 232, gatekeeper 602
28 operates with an independent gatekeeper clock 610 that runs without regard for the
29 functionality of any other clock in the system. In one embodiment, this clock
30 operates at 12.5 MHz, but other frequencies will also work so this is not to be

considered limiting.

FIGURE 9 depicts the operation of gatekeeper 602 in handling a halt command (or a break command) in certain embodiments consistent with the present invention. Process 700 of **FIGURE 9** begins at 704 when a halt command is received by the gatekeeper 602. The halt command at 704 may either be a manual halt command sent from a user at host computer 210 or may be a programmed breakpoint provided to the gatekeeper by breakpoint controller 606. In either event, the halt command examines the clock signals on 246 and the data lines on 242 to determine their states at 708. If the clocks are not functioning and both data0 and data1 lines are high, this is used within microcontroller 232 to indicate that the internal watchdog timer has expired. Handling of watchdog events is described later herein. If the clock signals are both absent, but either data0 or data1 is low, then the gatekeeper 602 can ascertain that the microcontroller 232 is operating in a "sleep" mode.

In the event microcontroller 232 is in a sleep mode, the gatekeeper sends a message to the host computer informing the host computer debug software of the sleep mode of microcontroller 232 at 712. The gatekeeper then queues a halt command at 716 so that the halt command can be implemented at the next opportunity. In the case where the microcontroller 232 is asleep, eventually a timed event will cause the microcontroller to awaken and when that event occurs at 720 the microcontroller is halted at 724. The gatekeeper then sends a message to the host computer indicating that the microcontrollers are halted at 728. The host computer 210 then knows that debug operations can be carried out at 732 to ascertain register contents, memory information and carry out other such debug operations.

In the event the halt command at 704 is a programmed breakpoint, and the microcontroller is thus not asleep at 708, the gatekeeper 602 simply queues a halt command at 740 so that the microcontrollers halt at 724. Control then passes to 728 and 732 as previously. Thus, the breakpoint control and halt commands are

1 handled within the base station 218 by a gatekeeper circuit which may be either a
2 hardware or software based circuit to regulate the halting operation whether
3 originated from a programmed breakpoint or from a user initiated manual halt
4 command.

5 Gatekeeper 602 also controls the operation of the In-Circuit Emulation
6 system in the even a watchdog timer expires within microcontroller 232. Its
7 operation in this capacity is depicted in FIGURE 10 as process 800 starting at 804.
8 At 808, the microcontroller 232 is operating in a normal manner until a watchdog
9 event occurs resulting in the watchdog timer internal to microcontroller 232 expires
10 at 812. The watchdog timer's expiration causes an internal reset to occur within
11 microcontroller 232 at 816. The watchdog event further turns off the clocks in
12 microcontroller 232 at 832 so that the gatekeeper can determine from observing the
13 clocks 246 that they are in the off state. The watchdog event also pulls both data0
14 and data1 of data lines 242 to logic high at 836. The combination of no clock and
15 data0 at logic high and data1 at logic is the signal that a watchdog event has
16 occurred.

17 When the gatekeeper detects that there is no clock being received and that
18 data0 and data1 are at a logic high, the gatekeeper 602 is able to ascertain that a
19 watchdog event has occurred at 840. In response to this watchdog event, the
20 gatekeeper crowbars the reset line to a logic high at 844. This effectively freezes
21 the state of the microcontroller 232 as well as virtual microcontroller 220 so that the
22 currently available debug information is not disturbed. The gatekeeper then
23 reroutes the gatekeeper clock to the virtual microcontroller in place of the normal
24 microcontroller clock (CCLOCK) using switch 616 at 848. This enables the virtual
25 microcontroller 220 to continue operation under control of the debug software in
26 host computer 210 so that debug operations can be carried out. The gatekeeper
27 then sends a message to the host computer at 852 notifying the host computer
28 over bus 214 that a watchdog event has occurred and that the virtual
29 microcontroller 220 is in a state wherein debug operations and queries of registers,
30 memory locations, etc. can be carried out on the virtual microcontroller 220 at 860.

1 Thus, under the control of gatekeeper 602, virtual microcontroller 220
2 remains accessible to host computer 210 even after a watchdog event has
3 occurred within the microcontroller 232. Therefore, the user is able to ascertain the
4 state of the microcontroller by examining the virtual microcontroller 220 to
5 determine what defect in the software caused the watchdog event to occur.

6 While the present embodiment is implemented using a processor that does
7 not use pipelined instructions, this is not to be considered limiting. As long as
8 adequate time is available to serialize and transmit data over the interface, the
9 present interface and break management techniques could equally well be
10 implemented in a pipelined processor.

11 Those skilled in the art will understand that although the current invention
12 has been explained in terms of providing in-circuit emulation of the core processing
13 functions of a microcontroller. However, the present invention can be realized for
14 any complex electronic device for which in-circuit emulation is needed including,
15 but not limited to, microprocessors and other complex large scale integration
16 devices without limitation. Moreover, although the mechanism for use of the
17 interface between the host processor and the FPGA has been described in the
18 environment of an ICE system, this should not be considered limiting since this
19 interface mechanism can be used for other systems requiring FPGA programming
20 and communication functions over a single interface.

21 Those skilled in the art will recognize that the present invention has been
22 described in terms of exemplary embodiments based upon use of a programmed
23 processor. However, the invention should not be so limited, since the present
24 invention could be implemented using hardware component equivalents such as
25 special purpose hardware and/or dedicated processors which are equivalents to
26 the invention as described and claimed. Similarly, general purpose computers,
27 microprocessor based computers, micro-controllers, optical computers, analog
28 computers, dedicated processors and/or dedicated hard wired logic may be used
29 to construct alternative equivalent embodiments of the present invention.

Those skilled in the art will appreciate that the program steps and associated data used to implement the embodiments described above can be implemented using disc storage as well as other forms of storage such as for example Read Only Memory (ROM) devices, Random Access Memory (RAM) devices; optical storage elements, magnetic storage elements, magneto-optical storage elements, flash memory, core memory and/or other equivalent storage technologies without departing from the present invention. Such alternative storage devices should be considered equivalents.

The present invention, as described in embodiments herein, is implemented using a programmed processor executing programming instructions that are broadly described above in flow chart form that can be stored on any suitable electronic storage medium or transmitted over any suitable electronic communication medium. However, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the processes described above can be implemented in any number of variations and in many suitable programming languages without departing from the present invention. For example, the order of certain operations carried out can often be varied, additional operations can be added or operations can be deleted without departing from the invention. Error trapping can be added and/or enhanced and variations can be made in user interface and information presentation without departing from the present invention. Such variations are contemplated and considered equivalent.

While the invention has been described in conjunction with specific embodiments, it is evident that many alternatives, modifications, permutations and variations will become apparent to those skilled in the art in light of the foregoing description. Accordingly, it is intended that the present invention embrace all such alternatives, modifications and variations as fall within the scope of the appended claims.

What is claimed is: